1: Pelzer S-5 (1940-1941) 1945 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

Chapter I

FROM HUNTING AND GATHERING TO AGRICULTURE

Hunting and Gathering

101 174 222 105

In Southeastern Asia today there are peoples of different cultural levels carrying on some of the major economies that man has developed in the course of time. The first people to invade the tropical forest regions around the South China Sea were alithic, or prepalaeolithic, food gatherers,[1] who obtained their food by collecting edible wild plants and by hunting and fishing. Today geographically separated peoples are still living in a prepalaeolithic or palaeolithic food-gathering and hunting stage.[2] In Southeastern Asia they are represented by the Semang of the Malay Peninsula, the Andaman Islanders, and the Aeta of the Philippines—all of whom are Negritos, or dwarfed Negroids—the Kubu of Sumatra, the Sakai of the Malay Peninsula, the Toala of Celebes,[3] and the Punan of Borneo.[4]

222 462 105

The degree to which collecting, hunting, or fishing contributes to the food supply varies with the season; it also varies with different peoples, depending upon the resources of the region, the type of equipment the people may possess, and the skills they may have acquired. Food-gathering and hunting peoples have a division of labor under which the men hunt while the women and children gather vegetable matter and catch insects and small animals. The men may lend a helping hand, however, in digging up some of the very deep-growing yams. Men will also participate in the picking of fruits, especially when it is necessary to climb tall trees. The food gatherers and hunters of Southeastern Asia are nomadic in the sense that they do not remain long in one place. However, they do not wander aimlessly through the jungle. Each group has its definite territory—among

621

Note: The titles of the works here cited in footnotes have been abbreviated, whenever possible. The full titles may be found in the Bibliography, p. 269 ff.

1 Nippold (Rassen- und Kulturgeschichte der Negrito-Völker, 1936, pp. 253–255 and 398–400) considers the alithic wood culture of the Negritos of Southeastern Asia to be older than palaeolithic culture. These people use wood rather than stone as raw material for their tools. Because of the perishable nature of wood, archaeologists and prehistorians have not yet been able, so far as I know, to go farther back than the palaeolithic age and therefore have not been able to confirm the hypothesis of an alithic age. Menghin (Weltgeschichte der Steinzeit, 1931, p. 91) believes that, from an archaeological point of view, an alithic wood culture may be regarded only as a possibility, but Kern (Die Anfänge der Weltgeschichte, 1933, p. 35), who compared pygmy culture with palaeolithic cultures, comes to the conclusion that alithic wood cultures probably preceded palaeolithic culture.

2 By divesting the word "palaeolithic" of its specific chronological connotation the term may be used for present-day peoples who have a food-gathering and hunting culture.

3 The racial affinities of the Kubu, the Sakai, and the Toala are not clear; by some they are called Veddoids, by others, Australoids.

4 They are considered to be Proto-Malays.

1: Pelzer S-5 (1940-1941) 1945 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

222 [114] 241 462

During untold centuries in which they collected plant matter, women acquired an intimate knowledge of vegetable life. Eduard Hahn and others have therefore reasoned that women were the inventors of the cultivation of plants and hence were the first food producers. Hahn has given the name *Hackbau* (hoe culture or hoe tillage) to primitive cultivation, and maintains that the hoe is woman's implement; he draws a sharp distinction between Hackbau and more advanced cultivation, which he calls *Pflugbau* (plow culture or plow tillage) and ascribes to men.[9] It is indeed true that men generally farm with plows and that many examples may be cited of women using hoes; nevertheless, there are so many instances of male primitive cultivators employing hoes or similar instruments that Hahn's classification should be modified. While there seems to be no reason for abandoning his theory of the invention of plant cultivation by women, the classification of cultivation by tools, such as the hoe and the plow, ascribed to one sex or the other, is unsatisfactory. For, in spite of the fact that the collection of vegetable matter is almost exclusively the woman's task in the gathering economy, among primitive cultivators men either assist women in the cultivation of plants or entirely take over this activity whenever hunting or fishing become less important than soil tillage. Furthermore, many primitive cultivators do not use the hoe, but continue to employ the digging stick, characteristically used by the food-gathering women. From Formosa southward throughout the Malay Archipelago, as well as on the mainland of Southeastern Asia, the digging stick, also known as the dibble stick or planting stick, is frequently used by the primitive cultivator. On the other hand, there are advanced cultivators who till their land intensively with hoes; they use manure, rotate their crops, terrace fields that lie on slopes, and practice irrigation, yet they do not use plows drawn by draft animals (however, in some instances they have livestock). In other words, advanced agriculture does not depend upon the animal-drawn plow nor does primitive agriculture depend upon the hoe.

[101] [105]

A more fundamental distinction between primitive and advanced agriculture may be made in terms of land use rather than of tools. Primitive cultivators, with the possible exception of those living in arid regions, raise one or two crops on a given plot of land, then abandon the plot and make a new field, preferably in the forest, so that the old plot lies fallow sometimes for many years and may itself revert to forest; in short, primitive cultivators shift the place of their agricultural activities with regularity. The crop land consists of small patches scattered throughout the forest; these patches are extremely ragged in appearance and do not look at all like fields. A primitive cultivator would never think of removing stumps and fallen trees; instead, he deliberately raises his crop among them. This kind of cultivation is best described as shifting-field, or shift-

241 311

[9] Hahn: Das Alter der wirtschaftlichen Kultur, 1905; idem: Die Entstehung der Pflugkultur, 1909; idem: Von der Hacke zum Pflug, 1914; Kolff: "Hahn's hypothese," 1926, pp. 884–907.

1: Pelzer S-5 (1940-1941) 1945 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

taro had been cultivated on permanent flooded fields earlier than had rice. Another possibility would be that taro, together with the technique of irrigation, was introduced into Oceania later than were the yams and alocasia, and the Polynesians' more important fruit trees.

A folktale of the Bontocs in the mountains of northern Luzon furnishes us with another clue. According to Bontoc lore, their hero, Lumauig, taught them agriculture in a tiny irrigated garden, which is still tended from generation to generation by a special priest. The crop of this garden is taro and not rice.[16] This would seem to lend support not only to the thesis that the cultivation of root crops preceded that of grain but also to the thesis that terracing and irrigation were already being practiced by cultivators of root crops.

A beautiful example of sedentary cultivation with root crops as a staple has recently been discovered in the remote Grand Valley of the Balim River in the highlands of Netherlands New Guinea. On the valley floor of the Balim and its tributaries neolithic people practice intensive cultivation, including such techniques as the use of green and animal manure, deep tillage with stone adzes, the digging of ditches to improve the run-off and drainage of swampy land, and the construction of terraces.[16] On the slopes they practice shifting cultivation. In both their shifting and their sedentary agriculture the staple crop is the sweet potato, while taro is a secondary crop. Also subsidiary are bananas, sugar cane, and pandanus.

In most parts of Southeastern Asia, however, root crops have been replaced by such cereals as millet, Job's tears, upland and lowland rice,[17] and maize. There seem to be good reasons to believe that the first cereals cultivated in Southeastern Asia under the system of shifting cultivation were foxtail, also known as Italian millet (*Setaria italica* Beauv.), and Job's tears (*Coix lacryma-jobi* L.). Before their domestication these grasses, like the root crops and fruit trees of Southeastern Asia, had been used by alithic and palaeolithic hunting and gathering people. Shifting cultivators succeeded in domesticating these plants by selecting over the course of years the species most valuable to them. Although foxtail and Job's tears have largely been replaced by the more valuable grains, rice and maize, there are still shifting cultivators in India, Thailand, Indochina, Malaya, the Indies, and the Philippines who raise the former cereals. Burkill says of foxtail,

> Such a crop as this probably came into cultivation before man had settled enough to grow the better cereals. Its grain ripens in even as little as two months and a half from sowing, and the wandering tribes of the Malay forests are able to remain in one neighbourhood long enough to catch a crop: but the usual duration of the crop seems to be four months.[18]

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15 Keesing and Keesing: Taming Philippine Headhunters, 1934, p. 56.

16 Brass: "Stone Age Agriculture in New Guinea," 1941, pp. 555–569.

17 Upland rice is also known as hill, mountain, dry-land, or dry, rice; lowland rice is also known as irrigated, wet-land, or wet, rice.

18 Burkill: *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 1999.

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Chapter Twenty-five

PEOPLES, POLITICS AND PROSPECTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

101 184 361 105 THE setting of Southeast Asia may be summed up as one of extremes of relief (deltaic plains and mountains) and a climate mostly approaching the wet limit for plant life but merging into monsoonal types. To this setting the people have made varying responses, ranging from migrant food gatherers and hunters in the jungles, to subsistence farmers in the plains, but all turning upon woody materials for weapons, implements, house-structures and domestic utensils, upon rice, the cereal of the wet extreme, and upon social systems of communal help. The whole social and economic life has been galvanised over the past century or two by being more and more drawn into commercial and industrial activities developed in response to and on the basis of external needs for the minerals and agricultural products of Southeast Asia, whereas prior to that time the region was touched only by a trickle of traders moving between India and China.

FACTORS IN THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

174 177 311 175 Several factors account for the difficulty of obtaining firm data to fill in our general picture of the historical geography of Southeast Asia. In the first place, there grew up no strong literary tradition to last through the centuries and record the past in a form other than mythical. Here tradition is largely oral and literature essentially Indian rather than indigenous. And whatever there was of local record and history has rotted away quickly, the climate, the ants, insects and moulds soon destroying anything on wood, paper, leather or cloth. Moreover, in this setting of swamps and forest, the most easily available material is wood, and artistic tradition expressed in wood, whether in carvings, buildings or tools, rapidly disintegrates, leaving little of that sort of evidence which is the basis of our facts about early periods in other regions. Buildings and carvings on stone were not normal expressions of Southeast Asia people where over large areas stone is not easily come by and where